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**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 4, 2005

The Honorable Duncan Hunter  
Chairman  
House Armed Services Committee  
2120 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hunter:

We are writing to request that the House Armed Services Committee hold hearings to review the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, the law banning gays from serving openly in the U.S. military. In light of the military's personnel strains resulting from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, we believe it is necessary to evaluate the policy's effect on military readiness.

A recent GAO report found that nearly 10,000 servicemembers have been discharged under the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy over a ten-year period. Among those discharged were more than 750 servicemembers who possessed specialized skills critical to winning the Global War on Terror, including many linguists, interpreters, and military police. The GAO report also estimates that the military has spent at least \$200 million dollars in taxpayer money to replace and train servicemembers separated under this policy. At a time when our military is already stretched dangerously thin, we are concerned that discharging qualified servicemembers solely because of their sexual orientation is counterproductive.

American troops are currently serving side-by-side with 24 nations that allow open service in their militaries worldwide. Nearly 60% of all coalition forces in Iraq are from nations that allow gays to serve openly, including Great Britain, Australia, and Italy. In addition, recent polls indicate that 50% of all junior enlisted troops, and at least 63% of the American public, support lifting the ban on gays serving openly in the military – an additional reason to reassess the policy.

On March 2, we introduced H.R. 1059, the Military Readiness Enhancement Act, to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and replace it with a policy of nondiscrimination. This bipartisan legislation seeks to improve our force strength by retaining valuable servicemembers who want to serve and provide our military with the resources necessary to win the Global War on Terror. It is time for this committee to have a serious dialogue about ramifications of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy on our national security.

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Mr. Chairman, we share with you your commitment to ensuring that our military has the qualified personnel it needs to fight the wars of the 21st century. We therefore urge you to hold hearings on the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy and the Military Readiness Enhancement Act to determine whether this policy helps or hurts our ability to defend the homeland. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Marty Meehan  
Member  
House Armed Services Committee



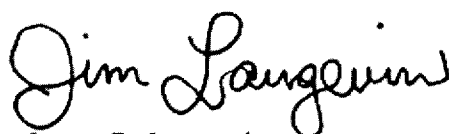
Neil Abercrombie  
Member  
House Armed Services Committee



Ellen O. Tauscher  
Member  
House Armed Services Committee



Robert A. Brady  
Member  
House Armed Services Committee



James R. Langevin  
Member  
House Armed Services Committee



Steve Israel  
Member  
House Armed Services Committee



Mark Udall  
Member  
House Armed Services Committee

CC: The Honorable Ike Skelton